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Book Reviews.

The Revelation of Jesus: A Study of the Primary Sources of Christianity. By GEORGE H. GILBERT, PH.D., D.D., Professor of New Testament Literature and Interpretation in Chicago Theological Seminary. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1899. Pp. xi + 375. \$1.25.

This is a treatise on that branch of biblical theology which is better known as the teaching of Jesus. The author himself so classifies it in his preface in putting it side by side with Wendt's well-known work under that title. We may note, however, by the way, that in speaking of Professor Wendt's *Teaching of Jesus* as the only scientific work in this line accessible to readers of English, Dr. Gilbert has either narrowed down the sense of the term "scientific" much more than he ought to have done, or else has forgotten some other treatises of considerable importance, notably the late Professor Bruce's *Kingdom of God*. However this may be, his own aim is to give a scientific and comprehensive view of the thoughts of Jesus regarding God, man, and his own work and person, and the destiny of the movement which he was consciously starting in the world.

In doing this work Dr. Gilbert is evidently conscious that either his method or the results he has reached are somewhat out of the usual order, and are liable to be misunderstood or wrongly judged by the public. He claims that his object has been purely that of the historian, and asks the reader to use none but the historical tests in forming an estimate of the work (p. viii). The question of its harmony or lack of harmony with any given creed can be one only of secondary interest. Taking Dr. Gilbert at his word, we would note first of all the praiseworthiness of his aim and the validity and value of his method. No lover of the truth will shrink from or object to the study of the revelation of Jesus historically. We may go farther and say that no lover of the truth will wish to study the subject in any other than the spirit of willingness to abide by the results of historical investigation, modifying his theological views, if need be, in order to harmonize them with such results. Therefore the question we ask is: Has Professor Gilbert used the historical method pure and simple? Our answer must depend on what we mean by historical method. If by this term is

meant simply a refusal to allow weight to earlier views on the character and person of Christ, we would say that Professor Gilbert has complied with this condition. He does not allow traditional views as to what Jesus meant any value whatever. It cannot be said, it is true, that he approaches his subject as if it were virgin soil. He recognizes the value of the work of such men as Beyschlag and Wendt, with the latter of whom he is substantially in accord, but he does break away from traditional interpretations and aims to study his subject directly from the facts as found in the sources.

But if by historical method we mean, as it seems to us we should mean, a thorough and comprehensive view of the field of historical investigation, we must decline to concede Professor Gilbert's claim. In our judgment he has approached his task with preconceptions which cannot but vitiate his results. One of these is that the thought of the age of Jesus was possessed and controlled almost exclusively by the Messianic idea. That there were Messianic hopes rife among the Jews at the time of Jesus is undeniable. The existence of these ideas explains many facts in the life and teaching of Jesus. But that they so filled the minds of men as to furnish a sufficient explanation of the whole world of thought in which Jesus moved, we think is not the case. Yet, aside from the idea of the fatherhood of God, Professor Gilbert finds scarcely anything that Jesus taught which does not center about and receive its inspiration from the consciousness that he was the Messiah. His utterances as to his preëxistence are made because he conceived himself as the Messiah and believed that the Messiah had a part in the eternal plan of God. The sending of the Holy Spirit is promised because it is conceived to be a part of the Messiah's work. The resurrection from the dead is necessary to complete the Messianic ideal in his mind, therefore it is foreshadowed. The second advent is simply an inevitable corollary of the Messiah's earthly mission. These, to say nothing of the many obvious applications of the Messianic idea, are some of the instances in which that idea is pressed into service as a universal solvent of all obscurity and difficulty. As might be expected, in the effort to use the idea everywhere as a sufficient explanation, Professor Gilbert has been compelled (of course unconsciously) to resort to forced interpretations. When we remember that men like Wellhausen and Lietzmann deny that Jesus used even such a phrase as "the Son of Man" in the Messianic sense, we cannot but look upon Professor Gilbert's confident use of this as a key-thought to the whole situation as misleading. The historical method in the

narrow sense has in this instance been misdirected by a misconception of the historical situation, and fails of satisfactory results because it is not associated with the historical method in the broader sense.

Space does not permit of our speaking at length of another misreading of the historical situation by Professor Gilbert, namely, the exclusion of all philosophical ideas from the world in which Jesus moved. This is quite fashionable at the present time. But, in view of the works of Philo and the undoubted influence of Alexandrian on Palestinian thought both before and after Christ, is it reasonable? Finally, we think that Professor Gilbert has made a mistake in following Wendt in the matter of giving the teaching of Jesus according to the fourth gospel along with the synoptics. We think the treatment of the subject upon the basis of the synoptics alone, reserving the reports of John for a Johannine theology, so called, yields much clearer and surer results.

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The waters of the Rhone as they enter Lake Lemman are opaque and muddy with glacier drift, but a bare thousand yards away one can look down to marvelous depths of pellucid clearness. The change is simply a process of classification. The sand and grit has sunk to its proper level. The stillness of the deep lake has permitted the natural separative work of gravitation to take place. So with the relatively new science of biblical theology which Professor Gilbert applies to the teaching of Jesus, as Professor Stevens, of Yale, has applied it to that of Paul and John, and the New Testament writers generally. We can believe his assurance that his effort to classify the teachings of Jesus has been purely historical, for well we know that no such simple, lucid, self-consistent result could be attained without the conscientious elimination of all known theological bias. Rarely is it possible to combine such depth of sympathetic insight into the meaning of Jesus' words and such a comprehensive grasp of the subject in its main divisions of the nature of the kingdom and of the person of the Messiah, with a simplicity of style which makes even the abstruse easy. The teaching of Jesus on both classes of subjects becomes intelligible, consistent, *natural*. And in this word we have defined the very trait which to that large class for whom the "natural" must perforce exclude the "super-natural" is the book's unpardonable fault.

The teaching of Jesus turns out to be not theological, his Messianic consciousness not metaphysical. For us this is an inevitable consequence of following the historical method. Those who cannot tolerate the result should define a better method.

And yet, while our praise is ardent and sincere, extending to the entire outline of the result, we cannot but think Professor Gilbert has some things yet to learn in the line of that method he so conscientiously applies. His great German predecessors have prefaced their study of the interpretation with a comparative criticism of the sources.¹ Professor Gilbert has prefixed a similar brief discussion to his *Life of Jesus*. His effort to maintain the historian's attitude is genuine, but not wholly unfettered as yet from unconscious assumptions of the old inerrancy theory. He is far from uncritical, and allows it to appear sometimes that he sees a distinction between the actual teaching, especially when variously reported, and the evangelists' notion of its meaning. He also classifies the teaching of the fourth gospel by itself. In general his sympathetic insight and broad reading make his conclusions as a whole strikingly true and trustworthy. But what else can it be but an unconscious preconception that the representation of the fourth gospel *cannot* be so widely different from the synoptic as would preclude direct apostolic authorship, when, after a long attempt to show that the doctrine of preëxistence in this gospel is purely ideal, he winds up (p. 225) with the argument that a personal preëxistence cannot be implied because pre-Christian sources have no more conception of this than the synoptists, *ignoring the possible influence of the epistles of Paul?*

Nor can it be called critical to build an important element of the argument on Matt. 12:40 *as against* Luke 11:29 f. (pp. 246 ff.), the former verse being one which Westcott and Hort select as in their opinion more likely to be an interpolation than any other in the New Testament not actually witnessed against by MSS.

Similarly the attempted distinction between "a *parousia* with the clouds," which Jesus expected during the lifetime of that generation, and "a *parousia* with the angels" at the end of the world (pp. 311-31), gives us an almost painful surprise after so much that shows the author's willingness to take the Scripture record as it is, without fear or subterfuge.

But these are notes; survivals of a frankly disavowed precritical method. And faulty as we must declare this almost indiscriminate

¹ The first volume of Wendt's great work, hitherto the sole scientific discussion of the subject in English, is characteristically *left untranslated* by the publishers.

treatment of what the author calls "the primary sources," it is a fault in the right direction, not a dogmatist's, but a historian's instinctive clinging to the last letter of his documents.

Many and many a student will justly thank God for Professor Gilbert's interpretation of the teaching of Jesus in the light of that teaching itself.

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The Christology of Jesus: Being His Teaching concerning Himself according to the Synoptic Gospels. By REV. JAMES STALKER, M.A., D.D. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1899. Pp. xvi + 298. \$1.50.

Dr. James Stalker is known everywhere as the author of admirable works upon the life and teachings of Christ. This, his most recent volume, is by far the most ambitious of any work he has thus far published, and is intended to form one of a series of works upon the teaching of Jesus. In the present volume, which is apparently the Cunningham Lectures of 1899, Dr. Stalker discusses Jesus' own teaching concerning himself, as it is recorded in the synoptic gospels. His work falls into six parts, the first being introductory, dealing with the importance of the teaching of Jesus, and the other five chapters dealing with the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Judge. In addition there are two appendices, one being a critique of Wendt's first and untranslated volume, and the other a discussion of the book of Enoch. Dr. Stalker writes in his usual clear and attractive style, occupying a position which, though thoroughly conservative, is at the same time not untouched by the scholarship of the day. It would be difficult to find a better statement than that upon p. 29: "The use of Scripture, and especially the words of Jesus, is not to supersede the spiritual and intellectual processes of the church's life by supplying her with dogmas ready-made, but to give stimulus and direction to these processes." In his study of the Son of Man Dr. Stalker seems at his best, while in all the other chapters he furnishes much that is helpful. The volume on the whole is to be thoroughly commended for its frank admission of the distinction between the presentation of Jesus in the synoptists and that in the fourth gospel, as well as for its numerous other excellencies.